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9. INTERPRETING SURVEY RESULTS

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Some statistical terminology is unavoidable when examining the results of a sample survey. Means, medians, relative standard errors, and relative distributions comprise the statistical terms used in presenting survey results in this report.

Measures of central tendency indicate the typical situation in a collection of data, providing a single figure that is representative of several values. The mean and median are measures of central tendency. A definition of the mean appears in the previous section. For example, the mean income of households is the sum of the incomes from all households divided by the total number of households. The *median*, in turn, is the value below which half of the values of a particular data category fall. For example, if the median income for households was $100, 50 percent of all households would have incomes less than $100 and 50 percent would have incomes greater than $100. The relative standard error, also defined above, defines the degree of statistical variability around a mean.

This report often focuses on the *relative distribution* of the results -- primarily through the use of *percentages* -- both between data categories and between different geographic portions of Palau. The use of percentages provides a quick, easily understood means of assessing the importance of a particular source of income, a particular type of expenditure, or a particular state or area. Tables presented in the following pages generally present both the data themselves and the percentages calculated from the data; in cases where space precludes presentation of data and percentages, a table will contain sufficient information to construct the missing information.

As a final point, because the HIES considers only a sample of households in Palau, and occasionally (e.g., the diaries) considers only part of the year, in selected tables below we extrapolate survey results for the entire republic for an entire 12-month period. Of course, this introduces the possibility of introducing further error into the study -- in essence magnifying the sampling and non-sampling errors incorporated in the survey. However, it provides a method of assessing income and expenditures for the republic as a whole, ultimately the desire of the HIES, or over an entire year.